

# EVILS OF UNDUE LEGISLATIVE INTERFERENCE.

BY THE  
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. . . . . "Yet much remains  
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories  
No less renown'd than war: new foes arise,  
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains:  
Help us to save free conscience from the paw  
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw."

*Milton's Sonnet to the Lord General Cromwell.*

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**FIFTH THOUSAND.**

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THERE are evils which idle and disorderly persons bring upon themselves, which the most enlightened institutions cannot prevent. There are also evils which are brought upon men by the unjust arrangements of society, and without any fault of their own. According as a legislature acts wisely or not in its domestic and foreign policy will the honest operative have plenty of work, cheap food, and good wages; or be condemned to short work, low wages, and poverty. The cause which most injuriously affects the toiling millions is—the *mischievous interference of the Legislature*, brought about partly by the advocates of a spurious philanthropy and false religion, and partly by persons who seek office and emolument at the public cost by the appointment of new commissions under Government, and who thus regard the House of Commons as a great *taxing machine* to be worked for their own individual advantage. Amongst the instances of interference may be adduced—

I. **FACTORY LEGISLATION.**—The ten hours' bill was a triumph of brute force over justice. It was a victory gained by agriculture over its more enlightened rivals, trade and commerce. It was the officious meddling with the superior work and wages of the North by a nobleman who would not see the degraded condition of the Dorsetshire labourer at his own door. Statesmen were occupied sixteen hours a-day in anxious avocations; members of Parliament were keeping out of bed their grooms and footmen till two o'clock in the morning by midnight legislation; their speeches were printed during the night for their perusal on the following day; and on their estates, in the seasons of sowing, reaping, or any other urgent occasion, the labourers were accustomed to work sixteen hours a-day; yet they had not the moral courage to declare that manufacturers and operatives ought also to be left to decide upon their own times of labour, according to the demand for work and the necessities of the workmen. Religion and education are both damaged, when a prime minister adopts a measure which he admits to be wrong in principle and dangerous in practice, in order to appease the clamour which has been raised in its behalf. What is this but the treading in the steps of the unjust judge, who though he feared not God nor regarded man, yet in order to get rid of a nuisance would, whether right or wrong, grant the petition of the importunate widow! The ministers disapproved in their consciences of the ten hours' bill, but they dared not refuse it. They were told of the danger of delay; that the operatives would be satisfied if they gained the object, and that they never would be satisfied until they did gain it. And have they been satisfied?—Let the Chartist convention; the speeches of the delegates from the manufacturing districts; the Kennington-

Common attempts at revolution\* ; the turbulent language of trades' unions, answer that !

The concession confirmed the people in that most dangerous of all opinions, that the improvement of their own condition rests, not upon their own diligence and forethought, but upon the Government, who could alter the distribution of property, fix the hours of work and the wages of labour. Instead, therefore, of relying upon their own industry and prudence, they determined to try what effect increased intimidation might have. Let legislators rest assured, that every deviation from rectitude, by seeking favour with the leaders of a multitude at the expense of justice to any order of the community, will bring its own reward ; and in the threats of invasion of the House of Commons by 300,000 men, which invasion nothing but the precautions and firm attitude of the authorities prevented, let them read the natural results of such unworthy attempts to interfere with the rights of private property.

2. RAILWAY LEGISLATION.—One of the greatest benefits conferred by modern science has been the introduction of railways ; which have been as useful as the discovery of thousands of square miles of rich land in the midst of us. They not only save time and expense in the conveyance of passengers and goods, thereby adding to the length of human life and diminishing the cost of living, but they open a new field for workers in earth, stone, wood, and iron ; they give fresh scope to talent ; and offer to capital at home that remunerative investment which it had begun to seek in foreign lands. In order to obtain the land for the various lines the sanction of parliament was required. Advantage was taken of that necessity ; rival lines and ruinous competition were encouraged ; millions were squandered amongst lawyers and witnesses, who, whilst kept in useless attendance upon committees of the House of Commons for months together, were allowed their five or ten guineas a-day, to the great increase of the first cost of the railways, and the consequent increase of charge to the public for travelling ; and not only were the railways compelled to pay heavy taxes to the government, but the parishes through which they passed were permitted to throw nearly the whole burden of their poor rates upon them. In order to lead men to risk their property in so untried a scheme, great profits were necessary ; and in the natural order of things, by drawing capital in that direction, great profits would have dwindled down to the ordinary rate of profit ; but this was too tempting an opportunity to be neglected. The proceeds of industry were being invested by millions in the new enterprise, and therefore the power which moves the representative system was brought to bear upon the public mind. The papers were filled with articles and letters from correspondents concerning the wealth, the power, the monopoly of railway companies. Accidents were exaggerated, and described in the most

\* One of the deputation from the Ten Hours' Committee, who spoke at Bath in favour of Lord Ashley's election, has since been convicted of sedition.

alarming colours ; terrible dangers were represented ; the fares were too high, and the comforts of the poor were disregarded ; these evils were not ascribed to any inherent demerits of the system itself, but to the want of a superintending and coercive power. Commissioners, inspectors, auditors, to be appointed by the government, could alone cure the evil. It was not difficult for candid men to perceive that these were the false accusations of interested parties having an object in view. It was easy to discover that the accidents were less frequent, and less fatal by far, than under the stage coach system. Men travelled twice as far in one half the time, and for half the cost ; and even the poor had in their open carriages more accommodation than was formerly provided on the outside of coaches ; and were enabled to travel in a few hours, for the same cost, the distance which in stage waggons had formerly occupied several days and nights, with the additional expense of loss of time and of buying provisions by the way. Yet the Government could not let well alone, but appointed commissioners, attempted the most tyrannical interference, and on the condition of obtaining new branches, exacted promises for the reduction of the fares upon the old lines below a remunerating price, and laying aside all regard to private property, took the liberty of ordering trains to be provided at a penny per mile, at a speed of not less than twelve miles an hour. And what has been the result of this interference ? It has been one great cause of the recent railway panic. Capitalists have taken alarm, and have sold out their shares at a great discount ; thousands of shareholders have been ruined by the tremendous fall in price of shares ; the works on new lines have been suspended ; and thousands of labourers have been turned off at a time when the want of employment renders them dangerous to the peace of society.

3. MILITARY AND NAVAL LEGISLATION.—Who does not know that the machinery which acts upon the representative system has been most energetically worked in order to obtain an increase of the army and navy ! It was not sufficient that 150 officers of the army and navy and their immediate relatives should obtain seats in the House of Commons, and take part in voting the taxes out of which their own salaries are paid. It was not enough that the people had borne patiently a greater charge for the army and navy than had ever been known in time of peace. There appeared every day for many months together articles in the London papers calculated to alarm the whole island as to the danger from foreign invasion, when not a nation in the world was thinking of invading us. These warlike appeals to the fears of England, aided as they were by suitable support from manufacturers of guns and of gunpowder, would have met with success had not Mr. Cobden and other faithful men exposed the artifice.

4. PUBLIC HEALTH LEGISLATION.—The art of manufacturing commissions and places has long since been discovered by medical

men. The more talented portion of that profession obtain an honorable income from private practice; but the profession is overstocked, and there are hundreds who are ever on the look out for opportunities of fastening themselves upon the public rates and taxes, and of securing to themselves as close a union with the state as that which, without benefit to either party, the Church of England now possesses. To this end they keep up a perpetual alarm, through the public press, by details of coroners' inquests, rumours of epidemics, predictions of returning cholera, and cruelties in parish workhouses. They not unfrequently usurp the character of *poor man's friend*, encourage persons to apply for parochial relief who would not otherwise have thought of becoming chargeable to their fellow men; they seek popularity amongst the inmates of workhouses and prisons by ordering wine and porter and all kinds of luxuries which, though common to the rich, are seldom obtained by the rate payers in general. Under the operation of this system many new offices have been created in our day; and when all places are full, and there are no more vacancies for registrars, vaccinators, surgeons of union districts, of union workhouses, and gaols, they work the public press for the extension of medical office and medical pay. They openly declare that it is degrading to allow medical men to be paid by fees, and that they ought to be paid by the State for taking charge of men's bodies, as the clergy are for taking care of men's souls; in each case the real object being to take possession of men's substance. Who has not witnessed with astonishment the display of zeal respecting ventilation, drainings, pestilential air, and the confinement at the public cost of every woman with her first child, the last proposal being introduced into parliament by Lord Ashley, as the crowning act of a course of old womanish philanthropy.

Already Parliament is called upon to confer upon the Health of Towns Commission powers of the most arbitrary kind. An organization, cunningly devised, for taking from the people the few matters over which they still exercise some control is proposed. It remains to be seen whether the dangerous system of centralization, which places the affairs of the people in the management of central boards, is any longer to be sanctioned. If so, it will require innumerable officers, entail unbounded expense, and will be followed by an ultimate confession of total failure, and a demand for a more comprehensive and more costly scheme. If the advocates of public health legislation are sincere, how is it that they have not shewn their zeal in matters within their reach? How is it that they have connived at the continuance of the window tax,—a tax on air, and light, and health, and ventilation. Lord Ashley declared to his constituents at Bath his disapprobation of this tax, and yet when a vigorous opposition would have ensured its repeal, he voted for its continuance.

5. ECCLESIASTICAL LEGISLATION.—The only effective religious teaching the state can give is to act religiously and to govern righteously; the only way in which government can educate the people is to set before them at all times an example of wisdom in acts of legislation, and of justice in administering the laws. The British press has been most effectually worked for the increase of ecclesiastical endowments. Whilst Dissenters have been contending about much smaller items in church rates, those offices which should have been provided for out of church property have been steadily advancing in their claims upon the poor rate. The six hundred Poor Law Unions in England and Wales, the new gaols, and other institutions, have been adding probably 1000 to the number of the stipendiary clergy deriving a maintenance from rates and taxes, and not from church endowments. The cost of the Chapel of the Bath Union Workhouse, which is more than £1600, and a chaplain's salary of £100 a-year, and all the expenses attending the performance of divine service and the administration of the sacraments, are defrayed, not from church property, but from an increased taxation of the people in the form of an unobserved charge upon the poor rates. We have a rich church establishment, yet certain papers and periodicals contain perpetual appeals to public sympathy respecting the spiritual destitution of the people. In a circular, recently issued by the Bishop of Exeter in behalf of the spiritual destitution of Plymouth, the Lords of the Admiralty are put down for £4000. By what authority they made this grant of public money his Lordship does not say. Can any one doubt the need of some new arrangement of the enormous revenues of the Church rather than of fresh acquisitions of wealth. Of the present income of the Church, probably not a third part ever reaches the clergy who do the work. We have lately seen thousands of pounds added to the incomes of the bishops, and still more for their palaces, yet at the death of a prelate no one is astonished to learn that he has left to his relatives £120,000.

On the subject of Church Property, the *Westminster Review* contains the following:—

“The reports of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for 1831 give the amount of the *nett* revenues administered by the Church as under:—

#### CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Sees of Archbishops and Bishops .. .. .	£160,292
Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, and Ecclesiastical Corporations .. .. .	208,289
Prebends and other Preferments in Cathedral and Collegiate Churches .. .. .	44,705
Renewal of Leases (average of three years) .. .. .	21,760
Benefices (10,718) .. .. .	3,055,451
	<hr/> £3,490,497

#### CHURCH OF IRELAND.

Sees of Archbishops and Bishops .. .. .	£151,128
Deans and Chapters .. .. .	1,043
Economy Estates of Cathedrals.. .. .	11,056
Other subordinate Corporations .. .. .	10,526

Prebends, &c., without cure of souls .. .. .	34,482	
Glebe Lands .. .. .	92,000	
Tithes .. .. .	555,000	
Ministers' Money .. .. .	10,300	
		<u>£865,535</u>
		<u>£4,356,032</u>

It is now known, from the progress of the tithe commutations, and other evidence, that the real incomes of the clergy were largely understated in these returns; and they do not, besides, include the incomes derived from college and school foundations administered by the Church (supposed to amount to about £600,000), nor those derived from lectures and chaplainships. The church-rates are of course excluded, not being a source of income; the annual burden of which to the Public is about £550,000.

The Commissioners state that the average of the stipends paid to English curates (5,282 in number), is £80 per annum. A re-distribution of the national reveues held by the Church (assuming them to amount but to £4,350,000 per annum) would admit of the following arrangement:—

15,000 Curacies, or religious professorships for rural districts, with salaries of £100 .. .. .	£1,500,000
500 Religious professorships for towns, with salaries of £500..	250,000
15,000 Infant school mistresses, with salaries of £50 .. .. .	750,000
10,000 Masters for day and evening schools, with salaries of £100	1,000,000
2,000 Masters for superior town schools, with salaries of £250..	500,000
500 College professorships (including school inspection), with salaries of £500 .. .. .	250,000
100 Heads of colleges and normal schools, with salaries of £1000 .. .. .	100,000
	<u>£4,350,000."</u>

It is commonly believed that the gross income of the Church of England exceeds twice the sum mentioned in the above statement; and it has not escaped public attention that great national objects might be accomplished by this enormous wealth. When once the masses know that the ecclesiastical revenues would pay all the poor-rates and church-rates, or the income tax, or one third of the national debt; or that they would remove a burden from the shoulders of industry equivalent to a gift of half-a-crown a-week for ever to every working man in the kingdom, they will not be willing to tolerate the existing abuses. If, therefore, the bishops and clergy still continue to oppose Church Reform; if the Legislature still permit the fooleries of Puseyism to exhibit themselves in more than half the churches of the land, at the public cost, then will the people begin to think that religion and education will flourish the better without the aid or interference of the State, and they will demand that ecclesiastical and educational endowments be appropriated to some better purposes.

6. IRISH POOR LAW.—It was by the energetic working of this machinery some years ago that the Irish Poor Law was obtained. The press teemed with vivid descriptions of horrible evils, but did not suggest the natural remedies. It was easier to recommend charity at the public cost, and it was more profitable to parties who got up the agitation. Were the Irish idle?—charity

would make their idleness permanent. In the midst of rags and filth you discerned levity, drinking, smoking, and faction fights. Did you try to get at the national character? Anecdotes without end portrayed Irish superstition, Irish fun, Irish wit, Irish treachery, and Irish assassination. So sure as mischief will always be found for idle hands to do, so sure was it that employment might remedy these evils, and equally sure that charity could not. But how was employment to be promoted? Estates were mortgaged, and landlords could neither sell nor cultivate them. A law, enabling them to sell the estates to those who could cultivate them, or to sell part and cultivate the remainder themselves, would have increased the quantity of employment, would have formed habits of industry, and would lead to prosperity. This was talked of, but not done. A Poor Law, by adding to the burdens, would increase the evil; yet as *justice* would meet with opposition from interested parties, and as charity would be so easy and so popular, all arguments were turned in that direction. There were prophets too in those days. The Irish would be so quiet, so contented, if they had but a Poor Law. They would remain at home, and cries for repeal would cease. In reply to predictions of universal pauperism, predictions backed by the authority of Mr. O'Connell, it was said that relief should be confined to the workhouse, and that not as a right, but only by a judicious selection of cases. On these conditions the Irish Poor Law was granted, but the people were not quiet; they did not stay at home; they did not cease to cry for repeal.

Then the men who had already obtained office and pay became more bold, and said, "Grant out of door relief, and let them claim it as a right, and all will be well." This was done, and matters are now worse than ever. Can any man doubt that the two millions sterling taken by force last year from the oppressed ratepayers of Ireland, who would otherwise have devoted the money to the employment of profitable labourers, have to that extent impoverished the best portion of the Irish people, and made more helpless and discontented the worst portion? The evil did not stop with the forcible collection of Irish poor rates at the point of the bayonet, but by a similar working of the taxing machine certain parties in England were persuaded to consent, and the rest were compelled to submit without their consent, to the appropriation of ten millions from the imperial treasury in aid of the Irish Poor Law. The potatoes had failed, it was said, and the people were in distress; the generosity of England would annihilate Irish jealousy and Irish hatred, and would for ever win the affections of the people. The potatoe rot in England was kept out of sight, and the hardships of industrious men in England were overlooked, because it was thought they might still be taxed a little more without being goaded to rebellion, whereas to expect industry and self-help from the Irish was out of the question. The money was granted, some of it found its way into the pockets of paid officers;



some of it went to the landlords in shape of rent; much was spent in fraud and drunkenness; and Ireland has been no more contented, and less thankful than ever. This unjust perversion of the powers of the legislature has produced its natural result. The minds of the Irish are more than ever fixed upon this country for support; their mendicant habits have been confirmed; and believing that a country which could send them so much money must have an inexhaustible treasury, they come over by thousands; and now they cover the land, not to work but to beg, and only quitting a place when they discover that work will be required for money. Nor are they who stay at home at all better. With English money they purchase pikes and rifles. In the hope of another shower of gold they utter words of murder and sedition, and yet during the year of Ireland's distress the Irish were able to spend eight millions sterling in intoxicating drinks.

There were also circumstances connected with the obtaining of the Irish Poor Law which were strikingly dishonest. Two commissions were appointed, of each of which the enlightened Archbishop Whateley was a member, and these successively reported against the adoption of a Poor Law. The interested advocates, however, were bent upon having it; and they sent over Mr. Nicholl, one of the English Poor Law commissioners, to investigate the matter. After a six weeks' tour, he made a report so decidedly in favour of a Poor Law as to enable the Government to obtain it from Parliament. It might have caused the agitators for compulsory charity, as a remedy for Irish rags and Irish sedition, to be more modest in their assertions had they known that similar statements of misery and crime might be made of the Irish in Liverpool and in St. Giles's, and also throughout the United States of America, where they are the only people usually seen in rags, and where they form seven out of ten of the inmates of the gaols and poorhouses; where also they are mixed up with every savage fight among gangs of workmen, and in every dangerous excitement at political elections. So serious, indeed, has been the grievance, as to compel native Americans to form societies for the obtaining of a law preventing foreigners from voting until they have been twenty-one years in the country; which law they declare has chiefly for its object to exclude the Irish emigrants, from whom alone they consider the republic to be in danger.

7. THE ENGLISH POOR LAW.—Prior to the year 1700 there were but few persons chargeable to the poor rates; and those rates, one hundred years ago, were only a tenth part of the sum which is now required. The following table of poor rates in England and Wales, derived from parliamentary returns, will show that the increase has taken place since the beginning of the reign of George the third :—

1748	1767	1785	1803	1815
£690,000	£1,531,000	£2,004,000	£4,268,000	£6,130,000

The amount, which progressed rapidly during the reign of George

the third, continued to increase till, in the year 1830, the poor rates amounted to about £8,000,000. At that time, especially in the southern counties, in which this system of relief had been most encouraged by the magistrates, the labouring classes were fast descending to pauperism; and the paupers were becoming more vicious and insolent. The inventions of Watt and Arkwright enabled this country to raise money for the war, and to bear its burden of poor rates; but there is a limit even to the wealth-creating power of machinery, and the most flourishing manufacturer will sink under an overwhelming load of taxation. An alteration in the Poor Law was essential, but a few simple enactments would have sufficed. The chief requirements were to take from magistrates the power of ordering relief; and in every parish to commit to a vestry, annually chosen by the ratepayers, all applications for relief. A central board was desirable for a few years, in order to suggest the most approved modes of parochial management. But the new Poor Law was introduced into the world by men who were too much enamoured of a system of centralisation; who after destroying all former vested interests fastened upon the country a tremendous staff of clerks, relieving officers, masters of workhouses, medical officers, chaplains, &c. At first the new system produced a great reform. Thousands of idle paupers went to work, believing that their day of idleness was over; but soon finding their mistake they returned to their former habits, and pauperism became more rampant than ever.

The continuance of the Poor Law commission for fifteen years, and the increase of expenditure, have arisen from the action of the press upon Parliament. Poor Law commissioners when persecuted for attempting to carry out the intentions of the law, were not always supported by Government; in consequence of which they introduced so many exceptions into their original orders as to destroy their efficacy. The expense of the commission increased as its utility decreased; and the management of their own affairs was gradually taken from the people and placed in the central board. At length the Poor Law commission is actually engaged in the direct promotion of pauperism, by teaching the people that it is not necessary to provide for a time of sickness and old age. This retrograde movement was reserved for the month of July, 1848, when Mr. C. Buller, President of the Poor Law Board, introduced a Bill into the House of Commons to sanction pensions for life to all the officers of Poor Law Unions, and temporary pensions during sickness. There are twenty-eight paid officers in the Bath Union, and, perhaps, ten or fifteen thousand in all the unions, from which the magnitude of the expense may be judged.

8. THE SCOTCH POOR LAW.—Efforts to deceive the public by means of the press have not unfrequently been made respecting pauperism in Scotland. Statistics of the poverty and misery of Glasgow have been paraded before the public eye; and the scenes of wretchedness have

been ascribed to the absence of a Poor Law like that of England. Yet similar scenes have been witnessed in Liverpool, with its thousands of wretched cellars, although it had a Poor Law. The agitators for paid officers in Scotland and more power to tax the Scotch, kept out of sight the real cause of poverty. Ardent spirits made their poor ragged and destitute. Could parish pay prevent this effect? Would it not rather increase it? Has Glasgow been improved by the more liberal allowance to the poor of late years? Let the recent riots answer that. Glasgow is poor! yet Glasgow last year spent one million sterling in intoxicating drinks! Is charitable aid the remedy for such a state of things? Is not a system of entire sobriety required? Why not stop the leak, rather than compel all hands to continue at the pumps? Of 30,000 houses in Glasgow 3,000 are devoted to the sale of intoxicating liquors. It has also been ascertained that at least 30,000 persons, or a tenth part of the population, go to bed drunk every Saturday night. 25,000 persons were committed for drunkenness and disorderly conduct during the year; and of these 10,000 were women. Nor is it uncommon, for the police to convey to the station-house in wheel barrows thirty or forty persons in a state of beastly intoxication. In Edinburgh, 130 females were brought to the watch-houses in a state of intoxication in a single week. In Aberdeen last year 2,000 men and 5,000 women were taken out of the streets in a state of drunkenness; and at one time 45 drunken women were huddled together in a small cell in the police office. Yet the rabble of Aberdeen have recently attempted to form themselves into an armed national guard against some supposed oppressors. If each of them would keep guard against the despotic sway of his own evil habits it would prove more efficacious. There is an enemy about to invade the drunkards of Aberdeen. His advance is thus described:—"So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man." Against such an enemy Birmingham guns are powerless. Would the people of Scotland learn by what means they may best avoid sickness and poverty, and best preserve health and employment, let them consider the ease lately recorded in their own newspapers;—Janet Sutherland, a native of John-o'-Groat's, during a life of 90 years, never tasted wine or spirits, never knew pain or sickness, and taught a school until the last year of her life.

9. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION.—An agitation is kept up for grants of public money for national education. Nothing is said of the endowments already existing, which were intended for the education of the masses, but which are devoted to the use of a few. Notwithstanding the past results of endowments, more money, more inspectors, more paid masters, monitors, and apprentices are demanded, that a centralised system of great power may be worked from Downing Street, ostensibly for the enlightening, but possibly for the enslaving, of the whole community.

Although public opinion has, at various times, protested against the attempts of the Legislature to place the education of the people under the State and the clergy, yet this is being accomplished by indirect methods. The bulk of the parliamentary grant goes to schools connected with the Established Church; the grants having been made in the following proportion—

National schools .. .. .	346
British schools .. .. .	30
Other schools .. .. .	34
	<hr/>
	410
	<hr/>

All the Government Inspectors of the national schools must be approved, according to the order of the Committee of Privy Council, by the Archbishop of Canterbury; in consequence of which the twelve inspectors are all clergymen. The poor rates and poor law machinery are also made subservient to the same end. In the Bath Union Workhouse there are 273 children, who are not only under the instructions of the chaplain, but are periodically examined by the Government Inspector.\* In his recent report to the Board, the inspector requires greater verbal accuracy in the Church Catechism; whereas, in those children who have not been baptized in the Church of England, the repetition of the Church Catechism must be not only verbally inaccurate, but a solemn mockery. The report of the inspector betokened a mere superficial examination; it contained no allusions to the evils of pauperism, no remark on the steady increase of the number of children in workhouses—the increase in the Bath Union Workhouse being from 130 children in 1837 to 273 in 1848—no question as to where this would stop: there was no allusion to the industrial occupations in which the children were engaged, which, in the mind of the guardians, form the chief hope of their future maintenance; and therefore the guardians, on the motion of the present writer, agreed unanimously to a resolution containing the following sentence:—"The Board will be gratified if the inspector, at any future visit, would direct his attention to the industrial training of the children in tailoring, shoemaking, carpenters' work, and agriculture; as also to the moral sentiments of the children with respect to pauperism and self support."

Moreover, the President of the Poor Law Commission, Mr. C. Buller, has recently introduced into the House of Commons a Bill, the object of which is the "formation of districts for the education of the infant poor," which will entail great expense upon the rate-payers—retain children many years at the public cost to be trained up as teachers; and which declares the chaplain of the Established Church to be "empowered to superintend the religious instruction of all the infant poor."

If the object of the Legislature be to increase knowledge, why retain the duty on paper, and the penny stamp on newspapers? When Messrs. Chambers were engaged in providing useful knowledge for the working classes, the sum which they ought to have retained for their trouble was taken from them by the duty upon paper. Many persons are now endeavouring to enlighten the people through cheap periodicals; but in order to supply them at the cost of a penny they are obliged to publish them at Jersey, or the Isle of Man, by which they avoid the penny stamp, which thus operates as a tax upon knowledge. In the United States men can purchase their daily paper for a halfpenny; whereas, when there is an endeavour to enable the people of this country to have the *Daily News* at their own house for threepence, instead of being compelled, by the high price of papers, to go to a public-house to hear the news, the Government interferes with taxes of fifty per cent. on the cost.

\* A layman, appointed as Government Inspector of Education in Union Workhouses.

10. FOREIGN SLAVERY LEGISLATION.—It is high time to cease from the attempt to superintend the affairs of the whole earth. The province of government is to protect the persons and property of the people subject to its sway; and as far as possible to preserve peace at home and abroad, that men and nations may trade freely and without fear. It is for this purpose that men consent to be taxed, and that certain funds are placed at the disposal of the Government, which is only a trustee of public money for certain definite uses. Whenever, therefore, governments collect an unnecessary amount of taxes from the people, and apply to other purposes the sums collected under that solemn trust, it is nothing less than a public robbery. Such is the expenditure now going on for the support of an armed force on the coast of Africa; and its effects have been as injurious as that appropriation of public money has been unprincipled. The slave trade is undiminished, and the horrors of the passage are greater than at any previous period.

Since the publication of the first edition, containing these observations on the Slave Trade, the author has received a letter, respecting slave-grown sugar, from a magistrate with whom he had acted in former years at anti-slavery conventions in London, from which the following is an extract:—

“While writing, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* of the 1st July has been handed to me, by which I perceive the Sugar Bill of 1846 is likely to be continued. By all accounts, that bill, admitting slave-grown sugar to be consumed in England, has given a great stimulus to slavery and the slave trade, with all its attendant horrors and sufferings; and I am of opinion the whole responsibility of that misery rests with you and a few others. If you had not created a division among the anti-slavery friends, I believe slavery in Cuba and Brazil, and, perhaps, most other countries, would, ere this, be nearly extinct; for a resolution of Parliament to have free trade with all the world in articles the produce of free labour, and to exclude the produce of slaves, would have gone far towards inducing slave countries to abolish slavery and cultivate with free labour. If the anti-slavery friends had been united, this could easily have been obtained; but you and a few others succeeded in sowing the seeds of discord, which rendered the anti-slavery body powerless. The old adage, ‘Divide and conquer,’ was apparent; you succeeded in carrying your point, which has increased the slave trade, and is likely to perpetuate slavery. The triumph may afford you pleasure now, but I doubt if it will on a death bed. With my views on the subject I would not have your responsibility for a million worlds! The cruelties practised on the coast of Africa, the horrors of the middle passage, and the groans of slavery would be ever present to my imagination. Trusting your life may be spared to make some reparation to the oppressed slave,

4th July, 1848.

“I am, yours sincerely, ———.”

Amongst the *few others* above referred to, are the distinguished names of Richard Cobden, M.P., John Bright, M.P., &c. But the worthy magistrate, whilst overflowing with benevolence towards distant slaves, is unable to exercise ordinary charity towards those of his fellow-countrymen who maintain opinions contrary to his own, but with more than papal infallibility consigns them to perdition. This severe language, however, the author is aware only expresses the sentiments which many of his anti-slavery friends entertain towards him, and he therefore lays hold of the opportunity afforded by this new edition to set forth some of the reasons which formerly induced him to defend the right of the people of England to cheap sugar, from whatever part of the earth they could obtain it; in the validity of which reasons the years which have since elapsed have the more fully confirmed him.

1. Legislative attempts to keep out slave-grown sugar, made, on the part of some persons, honestly, but by others hypocritically, have robbed the people of

England of several millions sterling annually. But for these efforts the poor man might have had sugar at 2d. per lb. The twenty millions given for emancipation will afford no adequate idea of the cost of the West India proprietor to this country; one hundred millions would describe only a part of that cost; and yet, at this time of financial difficulty, when the National Debt and public credit are endangered, the Government has been induced to make still further grants to their pauperised appeals. It was in order to persuade the people of England quietly to pay three times its value for sugar that these West-India planters got up a cry against the sin of consuming slave-grown sugar; when, at the very time, they were using it themselves in the West Indies, and sending their own sugar to enjoy the monopoly of the British market.

2. To keep from the people cheap sugar, because it is slave-grown, is wrong in principle. A nation assumes a false position when it makes itself responsible for the morals of the nations with which its commerce is carried on. Individuals may endeavour, by argument and example, to improve the condition of foreign countries; but legislative interference, by fiscal regulations for this purpose, inflicts injustice upon the nation interfered with, and imposes burdens upon the people at home which they ought not to bear. It also introduces a test of good government by which no government can stand. It implies that our admission of the produce of foreign countries sanctions the laws and institutions of those countries. According to which, the import of tallow from Russia would imply our approval of the conduct of the Emperor to the serfs of his dominion. Articles from other countries would imply our sanction of Popery, Mahomedanism, and Idolatry.

3. It is also impracticable in operation, because we are in the daily use of slave-grown cotton, tobacco, rice, &c. And although the persons interested in keeping up the price of sugar confine their arguments to that commodity, yet the rest are equally liable to these objections. And, at an anti-slavery convention some years ago, when Dr. Lushington spoke against the admission of slave-grown sugar, which he described as "the blood and bones of the slave," the writer of this took occasion to remind him that on sitting down he regaled himself with a pinch of slave-grown snuff.

4. The attempt to exclude slave-grown produce is anti-Christian. The Christian religion is a service of perfect freedom; whereas, the position of a man whose conscience is offended by the use of slave-grown produce, is that of bondage. He is called to liberty, but he has become a slave. He cannot eat with his friends; he cannot put on clothing, or even read a Bible, without using slave-grown produce. Yea, the very gold in his purse must rise up in judgment against him. This inconsistency is acknowledged, but it is answered that "two blacks cannot make one white"; and that the use of slave-grown sugar is not the less sinful because we use other slave-grown products also. But, surely, they who think it sinful to use slave-grown produce, have no right to use it in any form; their conscience is too accommodating. We maintain that a law which cannot be kept is not according to God's law; and that the Christian religion cannot sanction a theory which involves the conscience in perpetual doubt and bondage. A yoke which we are not able to bear cannot be imposed by that Saviour who says—"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He who gives a fair price in the open market for the goods he requires, without feeling responsible for the morals of the nations or men from whom he obtains them, may use them with thankfulness; but he that will not allow himself to use the necessities of life until he has ascertained that there is no slavery or oppression mingled with their production, must needs go out of the world. But if a man allows his conscience to be reconciled to the cotton, the paper, and the gold, which are the products of slavery, and reserves his objections for the slave-grown sugar, he condemns himself as a hypocrite; for "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." Had he the tender conscience of a Christian, and the courage of a martyr, he would rather die than use any of those things which he regards as sinful and accursed.

5. It is said that "slaves are stolen, and therefore the consumers of slave-grown produce are the receivers of stolen goods." This is not logical reasoning. That slaves are stolen, the writer of this has asserted at a time when many of those who now pretend to scruples of conscience were the owners of slaves, and defenders of slavery; and he used every means in his power at public meetings,

and at anti-slavery conventions, to obtain freedom for the slave ; and, when in America, he preached against slavery to a congregation chiefly consisting of slave owners. But he has yet to learn that the products of slave labour can, with any truth, be called stolen goods. This would not only make us a nation of thieves, but it would do away all clear perception of right and wrong. The earth which the slaves cultivate is God's earth ; the fruits which grow upon it are for man's use ; and, although the earth were filled with violence, and every labourer a slave, yet the righteous man may freely eat of those fruits with a good conscience. The crime of man-stealing must be estimated by itself. To his own Master the slave owner must stand or fall. The Judge of all the earth will do right ; and to him, and not to us, vengeance belongeth ; but he will never permit that the fruits of the earth shall be considered unfit for man's use because of the wickedness of man. How is the advocate of freedom to remonstrate face to face with the slave owner ; how is he to see the condition of the slaves, or to circulate books in the slave states, unless he can live in those states ? And how can he live, according to this theory, when every kind of food is slave-grown, and where his books must be paid for in slave owner's money ?

6. And, whilst reasoning with the slave owner, will this argument of the greater cost of free labour tend to convince him of the superiority of freedom over slavery ? Before the Emancipation, the Anti-Slavery Society maintained that free labour was cheaper than slave labour, and would beat it, in open competition, in the markets of the world ! But now they say, unless you place obstacles in the way of slave-grown produce, our free labour will have no chance ! Is there to be no end of this barefaced hypocrisy ?—this trifling with past reasonings and present facts ? How long shall the West-India proprietors and mortgagees terrify the Prime Minister and deceive the weakminded ? When will the nation learn that the only way to put an end to their clamour will be to meet it with a resolute refusal, and a firm determination to have cheap sugar, and, very shortly, an entire free trade in sugar ?

7. It is time to look at home, and for Government to use their power, and expend the revenue for the good of the people at home. To make sugar dearer, is to make the people work longer in order to pay for it, and this is slavery. To improve the condition of the West-India proprietor, by taking from the English operative, is robbery. To do this on pretence of benevolence is hypocrisy ; to do it by indirect taxation is meanness. It is thus that "the hire of the labourer is kept back by fraud," and even if good were to result to the slave, the act is wicked, as we are plainly told that we must not do evil that good may come.

8. Weaker brethren amongst the early Christians dared not eat meat which had been offered to idols, and men of stronger minds were content in their presence voluntarily to abstain. But the Apostle Paul would sanction no compulsion in such matters. Even so let the man who has conscientious scruples against slave-grown produce abstain therefrom ; and let him, if he pleases, try to persuade others to unite with him in such voluntary surrender of their comforts ; but let him not play the tyrant, and seek, by force of law, to compel millions of his fellow men, who have no such scruples, to abstain or else to pay an exorbitant price !

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Is it then too much to say that in adding to the taxes of the country for all these purposes, governments have reversed the divine intention in their origin ? They were intended to be a "terror to evil doers," but they have interfered with trade, and robbed the wages fund until they have become a terror to honest men.

Legislative interference usually assumes the form of religion or charity ; but its piety and its kindness are either pretended or mistaken. It robs one man that it may be generous to another. In its piety it takes from the dissenter to pay for the worship of the churchman. It makes Christian England contribute towards the support of the Idol Juggernaut ; with taxes paid by men of sound faith it educates the students of Maynooth in an exploded superstition ; rather

than remove the abuses of the Protestant Church in Ireland, it would give salaries to 3000 Catholic priests at the expense of those sincere Christians who regard both with abhorrence. In its charity it has emancipated distant slaves, and has saddled domestic industry with an addition of twenty millions to the National Debt. It has relieved mendicancy in Ireland by a tax of ten millions upon British industry. In its pity it has dismissed women from collieries and children from factories, where they earned their own living; it has shaken the felon by the hand, and has smiled upon the indolent pauper; but it has treated roughly the oppressed mechanic, by whose toil the wants of the country are supplied. It is owing to undue legislative interference that there are now so many thousands of unemployed and disorderly persons; it is owing to acts of justice in passing the Reform Bill, repealing the Corn Laws, and reducing the duties upon the necessaries of life, that the most dangerous elements of discontent have been removed from the midst of us, and that this country has not suffered so much from recent convulsions as most of the continental nations. By persevering in legislative interference, trade and commerce will disappear; poverty and rebellion will cover the land; the National Debt and the National Church will be destroyed. By removing the evils caused by past interference, and by governing justly in the time to come, the blessing of heaven will be upon us; prosperity and contentment will return; England will be placed beyond the reach of revolutionary disturbance; and the throne will be established in righteousness.

BATH; Nov. 25, 1848.

[First Thousand May 15, 1848.]

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